

AMERICAN PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION

**MEDICARE**

DIRECT

ACCESS





## DEAR COLLEAGUES:

2003 will be a year for the history books. It will be remembered as the year in which our profession faced one of its greatest challenges and greatest opportunities—passage of the **Medicare Patient Access to Physical Therapists Act**. This legislation is so important to the health of our nation's citizens that I consider it to be the most critical legislation with which APTA has been involved in the past 20 years.

If this legislation passes, millions of Medicare Part B beneficiaries will *finally* be able to access the physical therapy services they need—no longer constrained by arbitrary barriers or unnecessary costs. In addition, this legislation will secure payment for direct access under Medicare—the nation's largest insurer. If Medicare reimburses for direct access services, it's likely that other payers would follow suit.

Finally, the legislation would recognize direct access *as defined by state laws*. Medicare patients who live in direct access states would have the same access to physical therapists as other non-Medicare patients. But if your state does not have direct access, the Medicare change would be meaningless unless direct access at the state level is passed. *That is why state direct access continues to be a high priority for 2003.*

When Congress adjourned at the end of 2002, APTA had secured 51 cosponsors for the House bill—an impressive accomplishment! With your help, I know that we can do even better this year. Please join me and hundreds of your colleagues in Washington, DC, at PT 2003: APTA's Annual Conference & Exposition, June 18-22, for APTA's "March On Washington." In decades to come, this will be remembered as a pivotal moment in our profession's history and *you will want to be there* as we call the nation's attention to how this legislation will benefit seniors and their caregivers.

President Theodore Roosevelt once said, "*...the man who really counts in the world is the doer, not the mere critic—the man who actually does the work, even if roughly and imperfectly, not the man who only talks or writes about how it ought to be done.*" In Washington this June, you can make sure your voice is heard, participate in this great democracy, and know that you made a difference in the health of our nation's citizens.

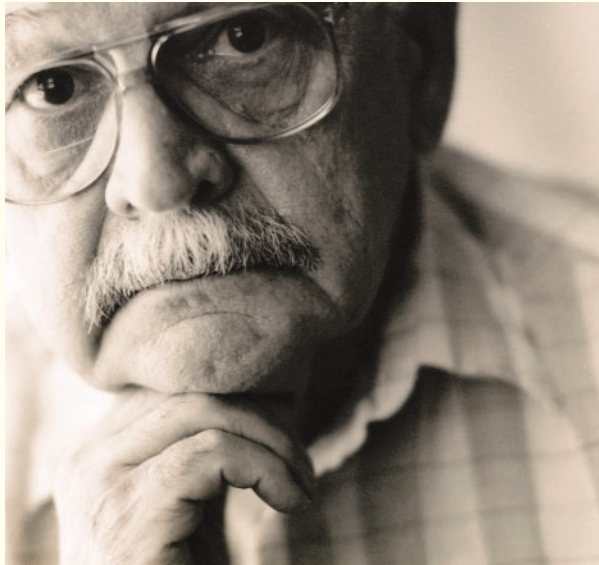
I am also asking that you get your patients involved in this cause. Tell them why this legislation is so important. Urge them to write letters to their members of Congress. Ask them to send in the coupon that accompanies the advertisement in this brochure.

This is an exciting time for physical therapy. It is also a crucial time to be an activist. Let's make sure that Congress rehabilitates Medicare for the Americans who depend on us.

Sincerely,

Ben F Massey, Jr, PT  
President, American Physical Therapy Association

# When Congress Rehabilitates Medicare, Patients Will Get Better Faster



## ***The Time Is Now*** For Direct Access To Physical Therapist Services Under Medicare

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) strongly supports the Medicare Patient Access to Physical Therapists Act. The bills recognize the ability of licensed physical therapists to evaluate and treat beneficiaries requiring outpatient physical therapy services under Part B of the Medicare program without a physician referral. This access is critical for beneficiaries as Congress takes on the challenge of rehabilitating Medicare.

Visit [www.apta.org/Govt\\_Affairs](http://www.apta.org/Govt_Affairs) today!

## Why Is Direct Access So Important?

**Direct access eliminates the burden of unnecessary visits to physicians.** Requiring a referral can cause delays and denials of services provided by physical therapists. Delays in care result in higher costs, poorer functional improvement, and frustration to patients. Direct access to physical therapists improves the accessibility to rehabilitation services.

**Direct access to physical therapists does not promote overutilization or increase the cost of health care.** A study on the cost-effectiveness of direct access to physical therapists found that the costs incurred for physical therapy visits were 123% higher when patients were first seen by a physician than when they went to a physical therapist directly.<sup>1</sup> This study also showed that physician referral episodes generated 67% more physical therapy claims and 60% more office visits than did episodes when the patient went directly to the physical therapist without a physician referral.

**Licensed physical therapists are well qualified to provide services independent of referral from physicians.** Physical therapists are educated at the post-baccalaureate level and receive extensive education

and clinical training to be able to practice without a referral. A majority of states have some form of direct access to licensed physical therapists, and legislators in another half-dozen states are considering similar laws. It's time that Medicare beneficiaries have the same access.

**Liability insurers and the Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy affirm that direct access does not jeopardize the health, safety, or welfare of the patients/clients seeking physical therapists' services without referral.** Health Providers Service Organization, the leading liability insurer of physical therapists in the United States, indicated in a recent letter that, "Direct access is not a risk factor that we specifically screen for in our program because it has not negatively impacted our claims experience in any way. In addition, we do not have a premium differential for physical therapists in direct access states."<sup>2</sup> To learn more about direct access to physical therapy under Medicare—and what you can do to help—visit [www.apta.org/Govt\\_Affairs](http://www.apta.org/Govt_Affairs) today!

1. Mitchell JM, de Lissovoy G. A comparison of resource use and cost in direct access versus physician referral episodes of physical therapy. *Phys Ther.* 1997; 77:10-18.

2. Health Providers Service Organization, in a March 22, 2001, letter to the American Physical Therapy Association, on file.



## What You Can Do

Passage of Medicare direct access legislation would have a profound impact on our profession. How can you help make this happen?

1. Join your colleagues for the “PT March On Washington” during PT 2003: APTA’s Annual Conference & Exposition, June 18-22, in Washington, DC. Visit [www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org) for more details.
2. Visit [www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org) to see if your Congressional representative or Senators are co-sponsors of the Medicare Patient Access to Physical Therapists Act.
3. If your Congressional representative or Senators *are* co-sponsors, write a letter or send an e-mail message thanking them for their support.
4. If your Congressional representative or Senators *are not* co-sponsors, write a letter or send an e-mail message urging them to co-sponsor Medicare Direct Access. Sample letters can be found at [www.apta.org/Govt\\_Affairs](http://www.apta.org/Govt_Affairs).
5. Run the advertisement featured in this brochure in your local newspapers. The ad may be downloaded in camera-ready format by going to [www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org). **Please remember that the newspaper (or other publication) will charge a fee for placing the ad.** Contact your chapter office to see if the ad has already been placed in publications in your area. APTA members may place the ads themselves, or ask other area physical therapy facilities to contribute funds to place the ad.
6. Make two-sided copies of the advertisement featured in this brochure and give them to your patients. Encourage your patients to complete the coupon in the advertisement and send it to their Congressional representative and/or Senators.
7. Contact your APTA Federal Government Affairs Liaison and offer to help. Find your liaison at [www.apta.org/Gov\\_Affairs](http://www.apta.org/Gov_Affairs).
8. Visit [www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org) for the latest news regarding Medicare direct access legislation.

## What Your Patients Can Do

Explain to your patients that passage of Medicare direct access legislation would eliminate the burden of unnecessary visits to physicians. This means no more delays in care, lower costs, better functional outcomes, and less overall frustration. How can your patients help?

1. Encourage your patients to write to their Congressional representative and/or Senators about why direct access under Medicare is so important. See a sample letter at [www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org).
2. Encourage your patients to complete the coupon in the advertisement and send it to APTA. We will pass it on to their Congressional representative and/or Senators.
3. Visit [www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org) for the latest news regarding Medicare direct access legislation.

*“The Medicare program should not impose arbitrary barriers to patients who need physical therapy, especially when the states have an entirely different standard for access. It just makes sense to eliminate barriers and unnecessary costs to Medicare patients.”*

Senator Blanche L Lincoln (D-AR)







*“This burdensome requirement  
in Medicare is a regulation  
whose time has passed. The  
referral mandate is unnecessary  
and limits access to timely and  
medically necessary physical  
therapists’ services.*

—Congressman Phil Crane (R-IL)





# Get Direct Access To Your Future!

June 18 – 22, 2003

Washington, DC



**Learn** how you can speak out about the issues that affect you the most!

**Attend cutting-edge educational sessions.** Gain knowledge, insights, and ideas about best practices—all evidence-based.

**Hear from our nation's political leaders** and insiders about legislative priorities, Medicare regulations, reimbursement opportunities—and how it all affects our patients and clients.

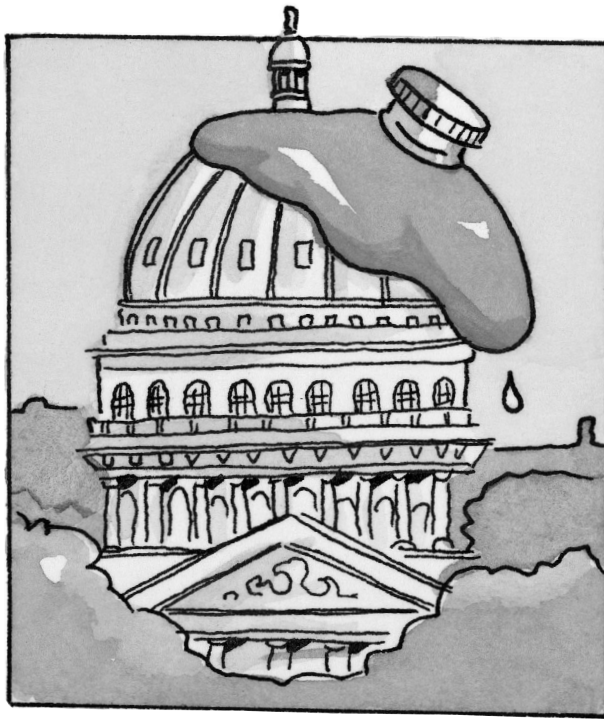
**Interact with your colleagues** at social events and knowledge networks.

**Demo the latest technology and equipment.** See the newest products, publications, and more. Plus, meet with career recruiters.

**Be a part of what promises to be a historic day** for the profession as physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students rally on Capitol Hill to let our voices be heard!



Check out [www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org)  
for PT '03 information,  
updates, and events!



# When Congress rehabilitates Medicare, patients will rehabilitate faster.

## Pass Direct Access to Physical Therapy legislation.

### Direct Access eliminates unnecessary referrals and helps keep health care costs in check.

Under Medicare today, patients must have a physician's referral before they can see a physical therapist. This extra step can cause needless delay and even denial of necessary physical therapist services. The result is higher costs, prolonged recoveries and increased frustration for patients and caregivers alike. And with the number of senior citizens growing exponentially, this problem will only worsen until Medicare is changed.

### It's under review and long overdue.

The Medicare Patient Access to Physical Therapists Act currently under consideration in Congress recognizes the physical therapist's ability to evalu-

ate and treat patients without a physician's involvement.

Licensed physical therapists are well qualified to provide care without a referral. They are educated at the graduate level and receive extensive clinical training.

### The benefits to patients are enormous.

A study on the cost-effectiveness of Direct Access indicates that the costs incurred for physical therapy visits were 123% higher when patients were first seen by a physician than when they went directly to a physical therapist.

This study confirms that Direct Access, while reducing the unnecessary time and expense of a physician's visit, does not promote overutilization of physical therapists or increase the cost of health care.

### Make sure your voice is heard in Congress.

We need your help to ensure that Direct Access legislation is included in any Medicare restructuring and passed in this legislative session.

Go to [www.apta.org](http://www.apta.org) to get the e-mail addresses to write your congressional representatives.

Or send us the coupon and we will forward it to Congress for you.

I believe that Medicare patients deserve Direct Access to physical therapists. I support the *Medicare Patient Access to Physical Therapists Act*.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Send to : APTA, "Direct Access,"  
1111 N Fairfax St, Alexandria, VA 22314



American Physical Therapy Association  
*The Science of Healing. The Art of Caring.*

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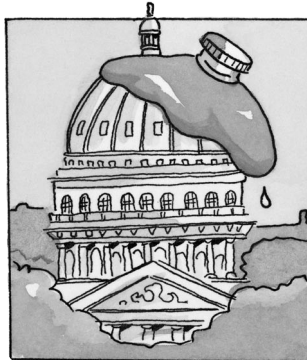
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